

The Problem We All Live With

Overview:

Students will consider what freedoms they have as individuals. They will look at Norman Rockwell's painting, *The Problem We All Live With* and analyze the illustration in relation to the civil rights movement. A class discussion will allow students to discuss the painting's concept and composition, and look closely at the objects and clues depicted in order to understand the significance of Ruby Bridges' story in American history. Students will then design a piece of artwork commemorating a civil rights hero or addressing a problem they feel they are faced with today in America.

Five 30 minute class periods:

- **Class 1 – Presentation and Think Sheet;**
- **Class 2 – Drafting, revision;**
- **Classes 3-4 – Work to complete illustration and class critique**

Enduring Understandings/ Essential Questions:

1. Artwork plays a role in documenting the cultures of different times and places.
 2. Responses to art vary, and are sometimes dependent on knowledge and understanding of the time and place in which it was made.
 3. Viewers of artworks can infer information about the time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created.
 4. The elements of art are building blocks used to create a work of art, while the principles of design describe the way artists use these elements within their work. By analyzing the elements and principles, students may interpret the visual meaning and intention of the artist.
 5. Artists may create art to make a statement about their thoughts about topics important to them.
- How does *The Problem We All Live With* by Norman Rockwell relate to history?
 - How were the elements and principles of design used to make this illustration successful?
 - Describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within our culture during this time.
 - Who was Ruby Bridges? Who are other civil rights activists or heroes from our past?
 - What problems are you faced with and how might you create a visual image describing these issues?
 - How might you create art that makes a statement about something that is important to you?

Objectives:

- Students will view *The Problem We All Live With* by Norman Rockwell.
- Students will consider the historical and cultural events of the time in order to understand the relevant details within the illustration that relay the message.
- Students will brainstorm problems they are currently faced with, complete a Think Sheet, and create a work of visual art that demonstrates an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.

Background:

After resigning his forty-seven year tenure with *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1963, Rockwell embraced the challenge of addressing the nation's pressing concerns in a pared down, reportorial style. *The Problem We All Live With* for *Look* magazine is based upon an actual event, in 1960, when six-year-old Ruby Bridges was escorted by US marshals to her first day at an all-white New Orleans school. Rockwell's depiction of the vulnerable but dignified girl clearly condemns the actions of those who protest her presence and object to desegregation.

GRADE

2-4

THEME

Four Freedoms, Civil Rights

LENGTH

Five 30 minute class periods

DISCIPLINE

Art

VOCABULARY

Civil Rights; Composition (Dynamics, triangular, Rule of Thirds, etc.); Diversity; Elements and Principles of Design; Emphasis; Media; Mood; Symbol; Technique; Thumbnail Sketch; Visual Inventory

Materials:

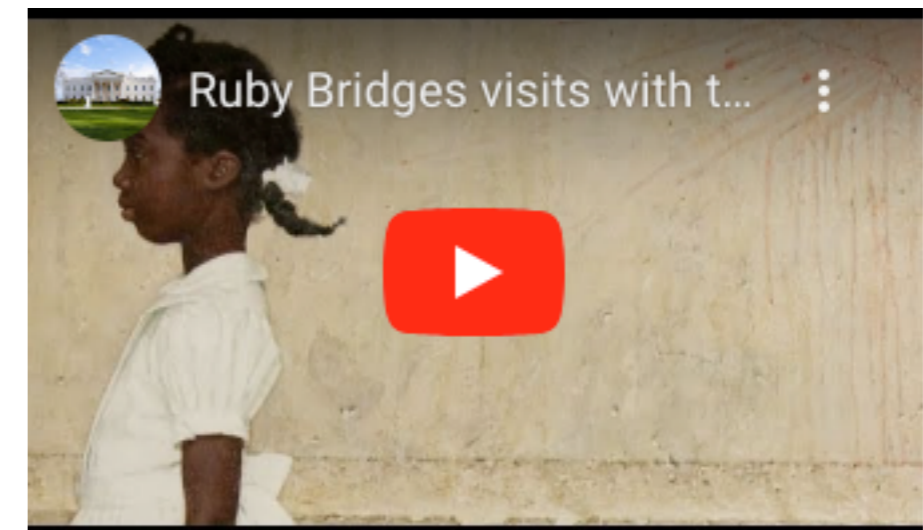
Multimedia Resources:



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
The Problem We All Live With, 1963
Illustration for *Look*, January 14, 1964, pp. 22-23
Oil on canvas
Norman Rockwell Museum Collection, NRM.1975.01



A Conversation with Ruby Bridges Hall
Norman Rockwell Museum



Ruby Bridges Visits the President and her Portrait

Classroom Supplies

- *Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story* by Ruby Bridges
- Large easel with paper pad and pen, or board to record brainstorming ideas on
- Worksheet: The Problem I Live With Think Sheet (2-4)



Activities:

Class 1

1. Display *The Problem We All Live With*. Ask the students if they have seen the image before. Ask the students to look closely at the foreground, the middle ground, and the background and to point out what they see, not what they think. The class will collectively take a visual inventory. You may offer the first example if the students are unclear such as, "I see a girl in a white dress walking with books in her hand." As each student contributes, restate their observation. You might be able to elaborate on what they have said to add more visual detail or you might ask them for clarification. You might encourage them to look closely and carefully. By doing this, the students will analyze the work and identify clues and symbols to help read the visual image, revealing American culture.
2. Ask if anyone can associate the image with issues or events relating to American culture and history. A discussion about civil rights and Ruby Bridges will allow for personal interpretations as well as historically accurate facts about the 1960's. Conversation about other civil rights activists or heroes is welcomed.
3. Read the students the story, *Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story*, by Ruby Bridges. Offer clarification and allow for questions when something is unclear. Then share with the students the description that is written on the Norman Rockwell Digital collection page about this illustration.
4. Ask the students what they think it would have been like to live during the 1960s with the tensions of the civil rights movement. Allow for the discussion to highlight other appropriate civil rights occurrences and activists. As a group, brainstorm a list of problems the students feel they have encountered, either personally, in their community, or on a national or global scale.. The instructor will record the students' ideas on easel paper, or a board; this list will be the starting point for students to plan a project of their own.
5. Give students the worksheet, The Problem I Live With Think Sheet, to complete. Walk around the classroom, offering help when a child is 'stuck' or needs redirection or clarification.

Class 2

6. Students will develop a thumbnail sketch and begin to consider what media would best emphasize the message they wish to convey, or the individual they will be honoring in their artwork.
7. Circulate around the room, checking in with each student and providing assistance if they need to talk about their ideas and material needs. Offer suggestions for revisions regarding composition and design.
8. The last ten minutes of class will be dedicated to a group share. Each student will be asked to explain their idea and the media they feel is best suited for their project. Throughout the project, students will be encouraged to talk with the instructor and their peers regarding their thoughts, ideas, and frustrations with their project, asking for help or feedback.

Class 3 – 5

9. Two more classes will be allotted to the completion of the project. Once students have completed the project, ask them to come together to present their project and explain their thoughts. Once each artist has spoken, comments from classmates will be allowed. The comments must be given in a respectful manner, demonstrate critical thinking, and be relevant to the project.
10. Allow time for students to prepare and display their artwork before class is dismissed.

Assessment:

- Students will be evaluated on their participation in the discussion (informal checks of understanding through questions) and completion of the Think Sheet.
- Students will complete a Think Sheet.
- Students will confer with their peers and the instructor upon completion of the thumbnail sketch and Think Sheet for feedback, suggestions and consider any revisions before moving on to begin the final illustration.
- Students will create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.
- Students will select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective in communicating their ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices.
- Students will demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio spaces.
- Students will analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (history and culture) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.
- Students will participate in a group critique, then prepare and hang their illustration for display.

Standards:

This curriculum meets the standards listed below. Look for more details on these standards please visit: [ELA](#) and [Math Standards](#), [Social Studies Standards](#), [Visual Arts Standards](#).

– Applied Standards

VA:Cn11.1.2

Compare and contrast cultural uses of artwork from different times and places.

VA:Cn11.1.3

Recognize that responses to art change depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made.

VA:Cn11.1.4

Through observation, infer information about time, place and culture in which a work of art was created.

VA:Cr1.2.2

Make art or design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.

VA:Cr1.2.3

Apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and techniques to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process.

VA:Cr1.2.4

Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.

VA:Cr2.1.2

Experiment with various materials and tools to explore personal interests in a work of art or design.

VA:Cr2.1.3

Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.

VA:Cr2.1.4

Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.

VA:Cr2.2.2

Demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio space.

VA:Cr2.2.3

Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and proficient use of materials, tools, and equipment for a variety of artistic processes.

VA:Cr2.2.4

When making works of art, utilize and care for materials, tools, and equipment in a manner that prevents danger to oneself and others.

VA:Cr3.1.2

Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating art.

VA:Cr3.1.3

Elaborate visual information by adding details in an artwork to enhance emerging meaning.

VA:Cr3.1.4

Revise artwork in progress on the basis of insights gained through peer discussion.